

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
Bureau of Customs and Border Protection
El Paso, Texas

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El Paso Sector Agents Receive Purple Cross Awards

Three Border Patrol Agents Honored for Courage after being Injured in Line of Duty

EL PASO, Texas – Three Border Patrol agents from the El Paso Sector were honored today for their courage and survival after being seriously injured in the line of duty in separate armed encounters dating back to 1985.

The agents were honored at a monthly meeting of Patrol Agents in Charge at the Airport Hilton Hotel, and were presented Border Patrol “Purple Cross” awards by El Paso Sector Chief Luis Barker.

The presentations were made to honor the agents as shining examples of the commitment and dedication possessed by the men and women of the agency who put their lives on the line every day to protect our nation’s borders. The agents receiving the awards were:

- Senior Patrol Agent (SPA) Guillermo D. Acosta: Agent Acosta was injured by a lone gunman during a sniping incident near Ysleta, Texas on October 14, 1985. During the course of events, Agent Acosta was shot once in the right chest as he attempted to end a seige of gunfire that threatened agents and the community at large. Agent Acosta spent several weeks in the hospital and two years in rehabilitation. He ultimately returned to work and is currently still assigned to the Ysleta Border Patrol Station. He has 20 years of service with the U.S. Border Patrol.
- Supervisory Border Patrol Agent (SBPA) Jose Zepeda, Jr. was conducting surveillance during nighttime hours along the border on February 2, 1989 when he was fired upon by a drug smuggler in the area of San Elizario, Texas. Agent Zepeda was shot once in the lower abdomen at near point-blank range. After weeks of rehabilitation, he recovered and returned to work, where he has become a Supervisory Border Patrol agent in Ysleta. He has 19 years of service in the Border Patrol.
- Border Patrol Agent (BPA) Valerie Jaramillo was shot once in the leg during a drug smuggling pursuit approximately 70 miles east of El Paso. At 4:30 p.m. on October 12, 2002 she and another agent were following a suspected drug smuggling vehicle traveling south toward the Rio Grande. Once they arrived to the river levee road, they were fired upon by unknown assailant in an ambush-style attack. Agent Jaramillo was struck in the leg by a round that went through the passenger side door. She was airlifted to an area hospital where she was treated and released the same night. She is now fully recovered and back on the job. She has been with the Border Patrol for 15 months.

Officials say these are the first recipients of the Purple Cross awards in the El Paso Sector. Families of the recipients also attended Thursday’s ceremony at the Airport Hilton Hotel.

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*****VHS video and digital photos available to interested members of the media.***